

Task Force on the Economic Future of Western Maryland

January 20, 2021; 9:30 AM

Meeting Minutes

Task Force Members in Attendance:

- Senator George Edwards, *Co-Chair*
- Jody Sprinkle, *Director, Government Relations, TEDCO*
- Cort Meinelschmidt, *Washington County Commissioner, MACO*
- Shelley McIntire, *Hagerstown City Council Member, MML*
- Al Delia, *Vice President for Economic and Regional Engagement, Frostburg State University*
- Stu Czapski, *Economic Development Specialist, Cumberland Economic Development Corporation, Allegany County Chamber of Commerce*
- Nicole Christian, *President and CEO, Garrett County Chamber of Commerce*
- Paul Frey, *President and CEO, Washington County Chamber of Commerce*
- Kelly Schulz, *Secretary, Maryland Department of Commerce*
- Andrew Sargent, *Sr. Business Development Representative, Western MD, Maryland Department of Commerce*

Task Force Staff in Attendance:

- Michael Siers, *Economist, Maryland Department of Commerce*

I. Call to Order

a. *Remarks by the Co-Chairs*

Senator Edwards welcomed members and the public to the meeting. Senator Edwards noted that the co-chairs have begun drafting legislation to reflect many of the recommendations voted on and approved during the January 7 meeting.

b. *Approval of prior meeting minutes*

The meeting minutes were approved unanimously and no objections were raised.

II. Initial recommendations

Task force members reviewed a red-lined document reflecting all updates made to the initial recommendations during and after the January 7 meeting. Cort Meinelschmidt recommended that language in TF-1 be amended so that counties, local jurisdictions, private businesses, or a combination of the three could provide the matching funding, rather than any one single entity. Paul Frey and Senator Edwards agreed. Senator Edwards noted that he and Delegate Buckel had been working on legislation and would amend the draft legislation when it came back to reflect this change. Jody Sprinkle provided an overview of TF-7 which had been re-written since the last meeting to more

specifically focus on Western Maryland. On TF-9, Nicole Christian noted legislation on the 'Explore Maryland Tax Credit' has been submitted, though the name is different. The bill, LR1585, is currently being drafted as the 'Credit for Travel, Hospitality, and Entertainment Expenses.' Senator Edwards noted that some items from TF-9 are captured in the Governor's budget. Given the fast moving nature of legislation naming and numbering, task force members decided to leave references as written and to update future reports/letters with necessary specificity at the time of creation. On TF-11, Nicole Christian mentioned that a bill has been drafted and is LR 2737 on the Senate side. Regarding TF-12, Senator Edwards noted that the task force had received comment from the public that a bill from Senator Hershey had not yet been submitted. Senator Edwards noted that the bill had been submitted and that Senator Hershey had confirmed that the language was very similar to the initial recommendation reviewed by the task force.

Task force members voted on the full package of recommendations and their votes during the meeting are recorded in the table below.

Task Force Member	Vote During 1/20/21 Meeting
Senator George Edwards	In Favor
Delegate Jason Buckel	<i>Absent during voting</i>
Jody Sprinkle	In Favor
Cort Meinelschmidt	<i>Absent during voting</i>
Shelley McIntire	In Favor
Al Delia	In Favor
Jake Shade	<i>Absent during voting</i>
Stu Czapski	In Favor
Nicole Christian	In Favor
Paul Frey	In Favor
Andrew Sargent	Abstain

III. Legislative Session Updates

Senator Edwards noted that the legislative session is underway and that bills are being drafted relating to TF-1, TF-2, TF-6 (2 bills have been drafted related to state-owned lakes), TF-7, TF-11, TF-12, and TF-14. Senator Edwards noted that as bills are drafted the co-chairs will work with other members of the task force and hope to have task force members testify in support of the various packages being proposed. Senator Edwards noted that several items will require letters of support and that those will be drafted as well. Paul Frey noted that rules for testifying have changed this year and that interested parties will need an account and be on a list 48 hours in advance.

IV. Next Steps

Michael Siers commented on the status of the interim report summarizing the task force's work thus far and noted that it will be distributed to task force members shortly. The report will focus on both the recommendations as well as the economic overview of Western Maryland as presented on during the first two meetings of the task force. Senator Edwards mentioned that no date had been set for the next meeting, but that one may be scheduled with relatively short notice should the need arise during the legislative session. Michael Siers pointed members of the public to the task force's website and the legislative hearing schedule for more information; he also urged members of the public to contact him to be sure they were on the distribution list for upcoming meetings/public distribution of documents.

V. Public Comment

Regarding TF-13, Chip Wood asked if the three agencies specified in the report should work together or separately. Senator Edwards noted that the intent is to encourage each agency to work more closely with trail and recreation groups in each county, but not specifically be tied to the task force. Chip Wood asked if the Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic Commission was still ongoing and if this recommendation could be accomplished in collaboration with the commission. Andrew Sargent commented that the commission has concluded and is no longer meeting. Chip Wood mentioned that he had done extensive background research on work completed on the Civil War Rail Trail thus far and could provide it to interested parties if it would be of interest. Senator Edwards said he believed any information would be helpful. Cort Meinelschmidt indicated that Chip Wood could send the information to him if he would like.

VI. Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Senator Edwards adjourned the meeting.